

Kobe III/Opening Remarks

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Atmosphere, and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
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As Delivered

Thank you, Stefaan, for the kind introduction.

Welcome to the United States and to La Jolla!

I am honored to stand before this esteemed group of Tuna Regional Fishery Management Organization Commissioners in the third meeting of the Kobe Process. You are a remarkable gathering of distinguished leaders from the world's tuna management organizations. And you are here at a time that could be a very significant moment in history.

I warmly welcome all of you to the United States, and to the beautiful city of La Jolla, California. The San Diego area is the historical home to U.S. Pacific tuna fishing fleets and canneries. It is now the home port

for a unique, distant-water recreational tuna fishing community and a commercial fishing fleet targeting a diverse array of marine species.

The rich ocean ecosystems off the coast of San Diego have also led to the development of world-class ocean research programs in this region, both government-supported at NOAA's Southwest Fisheries Science Center and university-based such as the Scripps Institute of Oceanography. I hope you will have time to explore this beautiful stretch of coast, where the ocean is central to the local way of life.

I wish to recognize those who helped organize and support the Kobe III meeting. Our collective thanks to:

- the International Steering Committee
- The Walton Family Foundation
- International Seafood Sustainability Foundation
- Fisheries Agency, Taiwan

- The Billfish Foundation
- American Tunaboat Association
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada/Pêches et Océans Canada
- Bumble Bee Foods
- Chicken of the Sea
- Starkist
- Pew Environment Group
- World Wildlife Fund
- American Fisherman's Research Foundation
- Western Fishboat Owners' Association
- San Diego Fishermen's Working Group

Call to action

I am pleased that such an esteemed group has convened here in La Jolla for these meetings because we have important and difficult issues

to consider. We all know that maintaining healthy oceans is essential to our future.

Healthy oceans are essential to those who rely on the oceans for food. Today, a billion people worldwide depend on seafood as their primary source of protein, making sustainable fisheries and aquaculture key to the world's future food security.

Healthy oceans are also essential to those who rely on them for employment whether it is for commercial fishing, the increasingly popular recreational fishing, or any of the industries that supply boats, gear, ice, or that process fish or that house or feed visiting anglers. Jobs and fishing related jobs are important to nations of the world, and increasingly, developing coastal states are turning to their fisheries as a source of food and a source of economic activity.

Sustainable management of highly migratory species such as tunas and swordfish present one of the greatest challenges to fishery managers

anywhere. The five tuna RFMOs represented here are faced with the daunting triple task of managing valuable and mobile species that live within complex ecosystems using international frameworks. Any one of these would be a challenge; together they are daunting. But as difficult as it is, this is a task at which we **must** succeed. The very future of the fishery depends upon it, not to mention the health of the ecosystems, and potentially sustainable economic opportunities for developing nations. This week, we gather together to strengthen the global collaboration that is essential to accomplishing this task.

I know full well how challenging fisheries management can be. Let me share with you some of the lessons we've have learned in the U.S. about tackling fishery management.

The legislation that guides fishery management in the U.S. is the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Reauthorized in 2007, this Act set firm deadlines for ending overfishing

and rebuilding depleted stocks. These deadlines once seemed impossible to achieve, but we are now turning the corner on ending overfishing in the United States. Today, we are on track to have measures in place by the end of 2011 to end overfishing and rebuild overfished fisheries in all 528 federally managed fish stocks and complexes. This is, of course, far from the end of the story as we will need to continue to carefully monitor our fisheries to ensure that stocks are maintained at a sustainable level, and continue to enforce the regulations. When changes occur, we need to be ready to make changes to our fisheries management, as appropriate.

The strict deadlines that the Magnuson-Stevens Act established for implementing annual catch limits required, in many cases, difficult decisions and short-term sacrifice on the part of commercial and recreational fishermen. We recognize this sacrifice and have made every effort to limit it by providing decision-makers with the best

scientific and economic information available upon which to base management decisions, to ensure that management actions are as precise and focused as possible.

History has shown that science-based, effective management does end overfishing. Let me emphasize this point with three examples:

1. Overfishing of North Atlantic swordfish occurred from 1998 to 2002, but has not occurred since, due to action taken by the United States and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas to lower catch quotas and close areas to protect juveniles. This fishery is now rebuilt.
2. In the Northeastern Pacific, lingcod was designated as overfished in 1999, with overfishing occurring for several years. Quotas, trip limits, depth restrictions, size limits, seasonal closures, and gear restrictions ended lingcod overfishing in 2005, and the stock was rebuilt several years ahead of schedule.

3. Atlantic sea scallops were once severely overfished, but with cooperation from scallop fishermen, the stock was rebuilt in 2001 and is now the top-valued fishery in the United States.

Compared to the decade from 1990-1999, when scallops were overfished, New England scallop fishermen are now sustainably harvesting an additional 17.5 million metric tons per year (131% higher landings) and ex-vessel revenues have increased by \$93 million annually.

And, apropos of yesterday's workshop, another major lesson we have learned is that rights-based fishery management approaches such as catch shares can be powerful tools for ending overfishing for commercial fisheries and maintaining sustainable fisheries through time. When properly designed, they provide a mechanism for aligning economic and conservation incentives, ending the race to fish, reducing by-catch and making fishermen accountable.

Although the U.S. is making very significant progress toward sustainable fisheries, we still have significant challenges. The incentive that we keep in mind is the following: Rebuilding of **all** U.S. fish stocks is estimated to result in tangible benefits for our commercial and recreational fisheries and the coastal communities that rely on them, adding an additional \$31 billion in sales impacts, supporting an additional 500,000 jobs – that is a half MILLION jobs - and increasing annual dockside revenues **by more than 50 percent in the United States**. Now, that's a worthy goal!

As the nations here today work together to make decisions in the various tuna RFMOs about how to manage the stocks for which they are responsible, it will be important to keep economic impacts in mind. Our efforts to sustainably manage these fisheries can and must consider the desires of coastal states to develop fisheries for their long-term economic benefit. Managing these stocks sustainably will allow

fishing on a sustainable basis, providing both food and economic gains for generations. As fishery managers, it is our responsibility to reach agreements that ensure the long-term sustainability of these fish for future generations. We have seen the consequences of past and current overfishing and must take global action now to see global benefits in the future.

Now I would like to suggest some steps that we might take during this meeting that will move us further down the path towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of these fish stocks.

Science-based management

One very important step that we can take is to ensure that our management measures are guided by sound science. We must continue to invest in the science that reduces uncertainty in fisheries

and in the monitoring that tracks catches. Tools and information, such as observer coverage and Vessel Monitoring Systems, are needed so that scientists can provide the best science to support decisions.

As we seek to diminish uncertainty, we must also acknowledge when it exists and address it through the application of the precautionary approach. When in doubt, be careful. It's that simple, and yet this wise adage is all-too-often ignored.

The work of the RFMOs' scientific committees depends on timely, accurate and complete data reporting by all members. We have already taken an important step by adopting a framework that scientists can use to present their findings: the Kobe plot, and a framework for presenting the likely outcomes of various management options: the Kobe 2 strategy matrix.

These tools help frame our decision-making. But just as important, we must commit to following the scientific advice. One step we can take this week would be to agree on decision-making principles to ensure that future management decisions are based on scientific advice. I am pleased to note that the Steering Committee has put forward a proposal on this topic for purposes of discussion at this meeting. I suggest we work collaboratively to find ways to move forward on adopting a recommendation concerning this topic. I hope this week we can build on the concepts of the Kobe plot and Kobe strategy matrix, and develop a set of decision principles that commit us to science-based management.

Examining and understanding ecosystems is also key to ensuring the long-term health of our oceans, and therefore our fisheries. An effective ecosystem approach to fisheries management should be geographically specified, adaptive, take into account uncertainties,

consider multiple external influences, and strive to balance diverse social objectives. In support of ecosystem approaches, the RFMOs have made progress in recent years toward improving data collection, better understanding of species interactions, and minimizing unintended catch, or bycatch – all of which are important for ecosystem management.

Scientific support– for example: integrating data, assessments, models and forecasts- must also be assured for this approach to work. In some cases, taking an ecosystem approach to management may also require an expansion of the mandates of existing institutions, better coordination among them, or the creation of new positions to better address these goals.

Tuna RFMOs have an important role, because they are responsible for managing the top predators in our ocean ecosystems. The tuna RFMOs are already moving in the direction of ecosystem management, and I

am pleased that the first meeting of the joint technical bycatch working group and a joint meeting of IATTC and WCPFC took place here yesterday, both of which will help us address some additional big-picture ecological considerations needed for ecosystem management.

Preventing IUU fishing through stronger MCS from catching through trade

While fishermen around the world are trying to make a living -- often under strict regulations to ensure sustainability of fisheries -- illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing continues to undermine our collective ability to effectively manage the globe's fisheries, and threaten the ability of coastal states to exercise their right to develop their fisheries in a manner consistent with the sustainable management of the fishery.

The Kobe Process has jump-started discussions on cross-listing of IUU

vessels, a very important step that will reduce the global mobility of IUU vessels and help keep their illegal product from reaching markets. We all stand to benefit significantly from working together to marginalize the rogue vessels that do so much damage to all of us. If we work together, we can make further, significant progress on this issue. I fervently hope we can do so. For this effort to be successful, we will need a unique identification number for each fishing vessel, to increase traceability and transparency, so that IUU vessels and their owners cannot hide behind new names. Enough is enough! It's time we put an end to the parasites that undermine our efforts and our future.

Moreover, I hope that the Kobe III meeting participants will reaffirm and build upon their commitment to adopt in each tuna RFMO a comprehensive Port State measure scheme, another important tool to combat IUU fishing, by preventing IUU vessels from offloading product and receiving services in our ports.

Opportunity to work together, to develop concrete solutions

Our long-term goals -- ending overfishing and rebuilding fish stocks -- are achievable with concerted, collective effort from all of us. While real progress will require tough decisions, we all stand to gain from increased food security, ecological sustainability, and enhanced opportunities for commercial and recreational fishing, and the related economic development. The Kobe meetings provide us with an opportunity to work together to develop concrete solutions to problems that impact all RFMOs.

Each country here comes to the Kobe III table with its own unique national fisheries and its own set of challenges. But we share a powerful spirit of cooperation and dedication to the future. It binds us together and it empowers us to forge new partnerships, make tough decisions and share solutions through multi-lateral action and capacity-building. The personal connections we make this week will open the

door to greater opportunities for collaboration that can help all of us achieve our common goals. We need one another. We empower one another. Together we can create enlightened fishery management that enables a powerful future.

Closing

In closing, I offer you my best wishes for great success at this third meeting of the Kobe process. The work that we do this week, and the ways in which that work is translated into decisions of the five tuna RFMOs, is critical to the health of our oceans and the security and economic opportunities of our nations. Sustainably managed fisheries bring untold benefits to communities, companies, and nations. But our work here this week is not easy. Different countries have different ideas and different needs. We will need to work together to achieve progress. As we do so we must keep in mind the urgency of our task. We do not have the luxury of time to get fishery management of these tough species right. We must be courageous and responsible, and keep

the long term in mind. I hope we can work together this week to achieve concrete outcomes that advance key priorities in the Kobe process. I look forward to successful outcomes.